1 JOHN 1:1-2:2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Word of Life	What Was Heard, Seen, and Touched	Introduction	The Word of Life	The Incarnate Word and Sharing with the Father and the Son
1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4
God is Light	The Basis of Fellowship with Him	Right Attitude Toward Sin	God is Light	To Walk in the Light
				(1:5-2:28)
1:5-10	1:5-2:2	1:5-10	1:5-7	1:5-7
				First Condition: To Break with Sin
			1:8-10	1:8-2:2

*Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following SPECIAL TOPICS: Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure, Textual Criticism, and Glossary.

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A. This passage is verbally related to the Prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:1-18, before physical creation), which is related to Gen. 1:1 (physical creation). However, here it refers to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

B. The emphasis is on
   1. The full humanity of Jesus Christ
      a. PARTICIPLES related to the human senses: sight, sound, touch (cf. 1 John 1:1,3). Jesus was truly human and physical
      b. full titles of Jesus
         (1) the Word of Life (cf. 1 John 1:1)
         (2) His Son Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 1:3)
   2. Deity of Jesus of Nazareth
      a. pre-existence (1 John 1:1,2)
      b. incarnation (1 John 1:2)

These truths are directed against the Gnostic false teachers' worldview.

SYNTAX (see SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS)

A. 1 John 1:1-4
   1. 1 John 1:1-3a form one sentence in Greek.
   2. The main VERB "proclaim" (NASB) is in 1 John 1:3. The emphasis is on the content of Apostolic preaching.
   3. There are four RELATIVE CLAUSES in 1 John 1:1 which are placed forward in their clauses for emphasis.
      a. "what was from the beginning"
      b. "what we have heard"
      c. "what we have seen with our eyes"
      d. "what we have looked at and touched with our hands"
   4. 1 John 1:2 seems to be a parenthesis concerning the incarnation of Christ. The fact that it is so awkward grammatically draws attention to it!
   5. 1 John 1:3 and 4 define the purposes of John's Apostolic proclamation: fellowship and joy. Apostolic eyewitness accounts were one of the early church's criteria for canonization (see SPECIAL TOPIC: CANON).
   6. Notice the flow of VERB TENSES in 1 John 1:1
      a. IMPERFECT – was from the beginning
      b. PERFECT, PERFECT – heard. . .seen
      c. AORIST, AORIST – beheld. . .handled

B. 1 John 1:5-2:2
   1. The PRONOUNS in 1 John 1:5-2:2 are very ambiguous, but I think almost all of them except 1 John 1:5, refer to the Father (similar to Eph. 1:3-14)
   2. All the "if's" are THIRD CLASS CONSITIONAL SENTENSES which speak of potential action.
   3. There is a significant theological variation between
      a. the VERB TENSES, PRESENT versus AORIST, in reference to "sin"
      b. the SSINGULAR and PLURAL, "sin" versus "sins"
      c. however, the exact theological meaning is not specified (see "The Heretics," D. below)

THE HERETICS

A. The heretics' false claims can be seen in 1 John 1:1:6,8,10; 2:4,6,9.

B. 1 John 1:5-10 relates to the theological attempt to separate knowing God (theology) from following God (ethics). It represents an undue Gnostic overemphasis on knowledge (see SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM). Those who know God will reveal His characteristics in their lifestyle.

C. 1 John 1:8-2:2 must be held in balance with 3:6-9. They are two sides of one coin. They possibly refute two different errors:
   1. theological error (no sin)
   2. moral error (sin does not matter)

D. 1 John 2:1-2 is an attempted balance between taking sin too lightly (antinomianism) and the recurrent problem of Christian judgmentalism, cultural legalism, or asceticism.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 1:1-4

[1]What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life [2]and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us [3] what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. [4]These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

1:1 "What" The book begins with a NEUTER PRONOUN. It speaks of the dual aspects of God's message which are
   1. the message about Jesus
   2. the person of Jesus Himself

The gospel is a message, a person, and a lifestyle.

▣ **"was"** This is an IMPERFECT INDICATIVE. It asserts Jesus' pre-existence. This is a recurrent theme in John's writings (cf. 1 John 1:2; John 1:1,15; 3:13; 8:57-58; 17:5). This was one way of asserting His Deity. Jesus reveals the Father because He has been with the Father from the beginning (cf. Heb. 1:1-3).

▣ **"from the beginning"** This is an obvious allusion to Genesis 1 and John 1, but here it refers to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (see SPECIAL TOPIC: ARCHĒ. The incarnation and substitutionary death of Jesus was not "Plan B." The gospel was always God's plan of redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; see SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH's ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN). This phrase in this context refers to the beginning of the twelve Apostles' personal encounter with Jesus.

John uses the concept of "beginning" (*archē*) often. Most of the occurrences divide into basically two categories.
   1. from creation
      a. John 1:1,2 (Jesus in the beginning)
      b. John 8:44; 1 Kgs. 3:8 (Satan murderer and liar from the beginning)
      c. Rev. 3:14; 21:6,12 (Jesus the beginning and the end)
   2. from the time of Jesus' incarnation and ministry
      a. John 8:25; 1 John 2:7 [twice]; 3:11; 2 John 5,6 (Jesus' teachings)
      b. John 15:27; 16:4 (with Jesus)

c. 1 John 1:1 (from the beginning of Jesus' public ministry)
d. 1 John 2:13,24 [twice] (from their trust in Jesus)
e. John 6:64 (from their rejection of Jesus)

3. context favors #2

SPECIAL TOPIC: JOHN 1 COMPARED TO 1 JOHN 1

▣ **"we"** This implies the collective yet personal witness of the Apostles (i.e., NT writers). This collective testimony is a characteristic of 1 John. It is used over 50 times.

Some scholars see this collective PRONOUN as referring to those of "John's tradition." This would imply guardians or teachers of John's unique theological perspective.

▣ **"have heard. . .have seen"** These are both PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVES which emphasize abiding results. John was asserting Jesus' humanity by his recurrent use of words related to the five senses in 1 John 1:1,3. He thereby claims to be an eyewitness to the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

▣ **"have looked . . . and touched"** These are both AORIST INDICATIVES which emphasize specific events. "Looked" means "closely observed" (cf. John 1:14), "touched" means "closely examined by feel" (cf. John 20:20,27; Luke 24:39).

The Greek term for "touched" or "handled" (*psēlaphaō*) is found in only two verses in the NT: here and Luke 24:39. In Luke it is used of a post-resurrection encounter with Jesus. 1 John uses it in the same sense.

▣ **"Word of Life"** The use of the term *logos* served to catch the attention of the Greek false teachers, as in the Prologue to John's Gospel (cf. John 1:1). This word was widely used in Greek philosophy. It also had a specific background in Hebrew life (for a full discussion, see Introduction to John 1, C). This phrase here refers to both the content of the gospel and the person of the gospel.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW AND GREEK BACKGROUND OF *LOGOS*

1:2 This verse is a parenthesis defining "life."

▣ **"life"** "*Zōē*" (1 John 1:2 twice) is used consistently in John's writings for spiritual life, resurrection life, new age life, or God's life (cf. John 1:4; 3:15,36 [twice]; 4:14,36; 5:24 [twice],26 [twice], 29,39,40; 6:27,33,35,40,47,48,51,53,54,63,68; 8:12; 10:10,28; 11:25; 12:25,50; 14:6; 17:2,3; 20:31; 1 John 1:1,2; 2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11,12,13,16,20). Jesus called Himself "the life" (cf. John 14:6).

▣ **"manifested"** This VERB is used twice in this verse and both are AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVES.

1. The AORIST TENSE emphasizes the incarnation (cf. John 1:14), which the false teachers denied.
2. The PASSIVE VOICE is often used to assert the agency of God the Father or the Spirit.

This term (*phaneroō*) implies "to bring to light that which was already present." This was a favorite term with John (cf. John 1:31; 3:21; 9:3; 17:6; 1 John 1:2 [twice]; 2:19; 3:5,8,10; 4:9).

▣ **"testify"** This refers to John's sharing his personal experience (i.e., PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE). This term was often used of testimony in a court case.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS

▣ **"proclaim"** This refers to John's authoritative testimony (i.e., PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE) revealed and recorded in his preaching and writing (2 PARTICIPLES).

▣ **"was with the Father"** Like 1 John 1:12, this is an assertion of Jesus' pre-existence. The phrasing is like John 1:1. Deity has been incarnated as a human (cf. John 1:14). To know Jesus is to know God (cf. John 14:8-11). This is an example of John's vertical dualism.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

1:3 "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also" This is the fifth RELATIVE CLAUSE, which resumes the thought of 1 John 1:1 after the parenthesis of 1 John 1:2. It repeats the VERBS of perception found in 1 John 1:1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE *KERYGMA* OF THE EARLY CHURCH

"we proclaim to you also" This is the main VERB of 1 John 1:1-3. It is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Knowing God demands a fellowship with His children! Christianity is corporate; it is a family. This is the main VERB.

▣ **"so that you too may have fellowship with us"** This is a PURPOSE CLAUSE (*hina*) with a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. The stated purpose of the Gospel was that those who never heard or saw Jesus might be saved by the Apostolic witness (cf. John 17:20; 20:29-31). It is this fellowship in revelatory grace that brings "joy," "peace," and "assurance"! The church is a community of believers, a body of believers! The gospel is for the whole world (i.e., John 1:12; 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOINŎNIA* (fellowship)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIANITY IS CORPORATE

▣ **"with the Father. . .with His Son"** These phrases are grammatically parallel in PREPOSITION and DEFINITE ARTICLE. This syntax affirms the equality and deity of Jesus (cf. John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7). It is impossible to have the Father (High God) without the Son (Incarnate God) as the false teachers implied (cf. 1 John 2:23; 5:10-12).

This fellowship with the Father and the Son is very similar to the mutual "indwelling" passage of John 14:23.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF GOD

1:4 "These things we write" This could refer to the whole book or specifically to 1 John 1:1-3. This same ambiguity is seen in 1 John 2:1 where the author states another of his purposes for writing the letter.

▣ **"so that our joy may be made complete"** This phrase is introduced by *hina*, whihc shows it to be a purpose clause. This is a PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE (cf. John 15:11; 16:20,22,24; 17:13; 2 John 12; 3 John 4). The believers' joy was made complete by fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. This was an important element in light of the disruptions of the fellowship caused by the false teachers. John's stated purposes in writing this book are

1. fellowship with God and with His children
2. joy
3. assurance
4. on the negative side
    a. to equip believers against the false theology of the Gnostic teachers
    b. to keep believers from sinning but if they do, there is an advocate

There is a Greek variant in this verse between

1. "our joy," MSS ℵ, B, L; NASB, NRSV, NJB, REB, NIV
2. "your joy," MSS A, C; NKJV

The UBS[4] prefers #1. Does "our" refer to the Apostolic eyewitnesses or to all believers? Because of the theological thrust of 1 John towards Christian assurance, I assume it is directed to all believers.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 1:5-2:2

[5]This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. [6]If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; [7]but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [8]If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. [9]If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10]If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. [2:1]My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; [2]and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.

1:5 "the message we have heard" The PRONOUN "we" refers to John and the other eyewitness hearers and followers of Jesus during His earthly life. John directly speaks to his readers ("you") in 1 John 2:1, probably referring to the churches of Asia Minor.

The VERB "heard" is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. This reflects the vivid recurrent term relating to the physical senses in 1 John 1:1-4. In a sense this is the Apostle John affirming his personal presence at Jesus' teaching sessions. John is passing on Jesus' revelations, not his own! It is even possible that the Gospels' unique "I Am" statements were John's remembrance of Jesus' private teachings.

▣ **"from Him"** "From Him" is the only PRONOUN in the entire section of 1 John 1:5-2:2 which refers to Jesus. Jesus came to reveal the Father (cf. John 1:18). Theologically speaking, Jesus came for three purposes.

1. to reveal the Father (cf. 1 John 1:5)
2. to give believers an example to follow (cf. 1 John 1:7)
3. to die on sinful mankind's behalf (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:2)

▣ **"God is Light"** There is no ARTICLE, which emphasizes the revelatory and ethical aspects of God's nature (cf. Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:20; Micah 7:8; 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17). The Gnostic false teachers asserted that light referred to knowledge, but John asserts that it refers also to ethical purity. "Light" and "dark" were common terms (an ethical dualism using these terms is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Gnosticism). It related to the dualism between good and evil (i.e., John 1:5; 8:12; 12:46) and possibly the Gnostic dualism of spirit versus matter. This is one of John's simple yet profoundly theological assertions about deity. The others are (1) "God is love" (cf. 1 John 4:8,16) and (2) "God is spirit" (cf. John 4:24). God's family, like Jesus (cf. John 8:12; 9:5), should reflect His character (cf. Matt. 5:14). This changed and changing life of love, forgiveness, and purity is one of the evidences of a true conversion (cf. Luke 6:43-45).

▣ **"in Him there is no darkness at all"** This is a DOUBLE NEGATIVE for emphasis. It is an assertion of the unchanging holy character of God (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17; Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (NT)

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

1:6 "If we say" This is the first of several THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which refer to the claims of false teachers (cf. 1 John 1:8,10; 2:4,6,9). These statements are the only way to identify the theological assertions of the false teachers besides the writings of the second and third century Church Fathers. They appear to be early (incipient) Gnostics. There are no Gnostic writings with the until the second century.

The literary technique of a supposed objector is called diatribe. It was a way of presenting truth in a question/answer format. The author makes an assertion which he knows his hearers/readers will not agree with, sohe puts these disagreements in the mouth of a supposed objector. It can be clearly seen in Malachi (cf. Mal. 1:2,6,7,12; 2:14,17; 3:7,14) and in Romans (cf. Rom. 2:3,17,21-23; 3:1,3,7-8,9,31; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7).

▣ **"we have fellowship with Him"** The heretics claimed that fellowship was based on knowledge only. This was an aspect of Greek philosophy from Plato. However, John asserts that Christians must live Christlike lives (cf. 1 John 1:7; Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 8:28-29). Remember, the gospel is

1. a person to welcome
2. truths about that person to believe
3. a life like that person's to live

▣ **"*yet* walk in the darkness"** "Walk" is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. This is biblical imagery expressing a moral lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). God is light with no darkness. His children should be like Him (cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16).

▣ **"we lie and do not practice the truth"** These are both PRESENT TENSE VERBS. John calls several types of religious people liars (cf. 1 John 2:4,22; 4:20; Isa. 29:13). Lifestyle actions truly reveal the heart (cf. Matthew 7).

1. 1 John 1:7 – "If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in darkness, we lie"
2. 1 John 2:4 – "if one says, 'I have come to know Him, and does not keep His commandments,'" he is a liar
3. 1 John 2:22 – "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ"
4. 1 John 4:20 – "if womeone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar"

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" (the concept) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

1:7 "but if we walk in the Light" This is another PRESENT TENSE which emphasizes continuing action. "Walk" is biblical imagery for the Christian life (i.e., Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

Notice how often "walk" and PRESENT TENSE VERBS are related to the Christian life. Truth is something we are, something we live, not just something we know! Truth is a key concept in John.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUE" (the term) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

▣ **"as He Himself is in the light"** Believers are to think and live like Jesus. We are to reflect YHWH's character to a lost world. Salvation is the restoration of the image of God in mankind (i.e., Gen. 1:26,27), damaged in the fall of Genesis 3.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FALL OF MANKIND

▣ **"we have fellowship with one another"** The term "fellowship" is the Greek term *koinōnia*, which means a joint participation between two persons. Christianity is based on believers sharing Jesus' life. If we accept His life in forgiveness, we must accept His ministry of love (cf. 1 John 3:16). Knowing God is not abstract truth, but initimate fellowship and godly living. The goal of

Christianity is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now. The Gnostic heretics had a tendency toward exclusivism. However, when one is rightly related with God, he will be rightly related to his fellow Christian. Lack of love toward other Christians is a glaring sign of a problem with our relationship with God (cf. 1 John 4:20-21 and also Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:21-35)

SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOINŎNIA*

▣ **"the blood of Jesus"** This refers to the sacrificial death of Christ (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). It is very similar to and parallel with 1 John 2:2, "the atoning sacrifice (propitiation) for our sins." This is the thrust of John the Baptist's "behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (cf. John 1:29). The innocent died on behalf of the guilty!

The early Gnostics denied Jesus' true humanity. John's use of "blood" reinforces Jesus' true humanity.

There is a Greek manuscript variable related to the name.

1. Jesus – NASB, NRSV, NJB, REB, NET
2. Christ – MSS א, B, C
3. Jesus Christ – NKJV

This is one example used by Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 153, to show how ancient scribes tried to make some texts more specific to refute the current heretics. Option #3 was an attempt to mediate the MSS variation.

▣ **"cleanses us from all sin"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. The term "sin" is SINGULAR with no ARTICLE. This implies every kind of sin. Notice this verse is not focusing on a one-time cleansing (salvation), but on an ongoing cleansing (the Christian life, cf. 1 John 1:9). Both are part of the Christian experience (cf. John 13:10).

1:8 "If we say that we have no sin" This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. Sin is a spiritual reality in a fallen world (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 1:18-3:20), even for believers (cf. Romans 7; Eph. 4:14; 6:10-18). John's Gospel addresses this issue often (cf. John 9:41; 15:22,24; 19:11). This verse rejects all ancient and modern claims that deny individual moral responsibility.

▣ **"we are deceiving ourselves"** This Greek phrase refers to personal, willful rejection of truth, not ignorance. All humans know something of God from nature (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-23) and an inner moral witness (Rom. 2:11-15).

▣ **"the truth is not in us"** The way to acceptance by a Holy God is not denial, but recognition of our sin and acceptance of His provision in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-31). "The truth" can refer to the message about Jesus or the person of Jesus (cf. John 14:6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" (the concept) in JOHN'S WRITINGS

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUE" (the term) in JOHN'S WRITINGS

1:8,9 "If" These are both THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which means potential action.

1:9 "confess" This is a compound Greek term from "to speak" and "the same." Believers continue to agree with God that they have violated His holiness (cf. Rom. 3:23). It is PRESENT TENSE, which implies ongoing action. Confession implies

1. a specific naming of sins (1 John 1:9)
2. a public admitting of sins (cf. Matt. 10:32; James 5:16)
3. a turning from specific sins (cf. Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; James 5:16)

1 John uses this term quite often (cf. 1 John 1:9; 4:2,3,15; 2 John 7). Jesus' death is the means of forgiveness, but sinful mankind must respond and continue to respond in faith to be saved (cf. John 1:12; 3:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION/PROFESSION

▣ **"our sins"** Notice the PLURAL. This refers to specific acts of sin.

▣ **"He is faithful"** This refers to God the Father (cf. Deut. 7:9; 32:4; Ps. 36:5; 40:10; 89:1,2,5,8; 92:2; 119:90; Isa. 49:7; Rom. 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Tim. 2:13). God the Father's unchanging, merciful, faithful character is our surest hope! This phrase accentuates God's faithfulness to His Word (cf. Heb. 10:23;11:11). This may also refer to God's New Covenant promise made in Jer. 31:34 (cf. Ezek. 36:22-36), which promised the forgiveness of sins.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

▣ **"and righteous"** This term is unusual in a context related to a holy God freely pardoning unholy people. However, this is theologically accurate because God takes our sins seriously, yet He has provided the means for our forgiveness in the substitutionary death of Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-31).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

▣ **"forgive . . . cleanse"** These are both AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVES. These two terms are synonymous in this context; they refer both to the salvation of the lost and to the ongoing cleansing necessary to maintain fellowship with God (i.e., when God forgives, God fogets, cf. Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Ps. 103:3,11-13; Mic. 7:19). The false teachers who denied the gospel, needed salvation. Believers who continue to commit acts of sin need restoration of fellowship. John seems to address the first group implicitly and the second explicitly.

1:10 "If we say" See note at 1 John 1:6.

▣ **"we have not sinned"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which implies that one has never sinned in the past nor in the present. The term "sinned" is SINGULAR and refers to sin in general. The Greek term means "to miss the mark." This means that sin is both the commission and the omission of the things revealed in God's Word. The false teachers claimed salvation was related only to knowledge, not to life. They theologically separated justification and sanctification.

▣ **"we make Him a liar"** The gospel is based on the sinfulness of all mankind (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23; 5:1; 11:32). Either God (cf. Rom. 3:4) or those who claim sinlessness, is lying.

▣ **"His word is not in us"** This involves the dual aspect of the term "*logos*," both as a message and a person (cf. 1 John 1:1,8; John 14:6). John often refers to this as "truth."

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW AND GREEK BACKGROUND OF *LOGOS*

2:1 "My little children" John uses two different diminutive terms for "children" in 1 John.

1. *teknion* (cf. 1 John 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21; John13:33)
2. *paidion* (cf. 1 John 2:14,18)

They are synonymous with no intended theological distinctives. These affectionate terms probably come from John's advanced age at the time of the writing.

Jesus used the term "children" to refer to disciples in John 13:33.

▣ **"I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin"** This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. John is making a definite distinction between PRESENT TENSE, an ongoing habitual lifestyle of sinning (cf. 1 John 3:6,9, i.e., a sect of the Gnostic false teachers) and individual acts of sin committed by struggling and tempted Christians. He is trying to bring a balance between the two extremes of

1. taking sin too lightly (cf. Rom. 6:1; 1 John 1:8-10; 3:6-9; 5:16)

2. Christian harshness and brittleness over personal sins

These two extremes probably reflect two different schools of Gnostic teachings. One group felt that salvation was an intellectual matter; it did not matter how one lived because the body was evil. The other group of Gnostics also believed the body was evil and, therefore had to be limited in its desires.

▣ **"And if anyone sins"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which speaks of potential action. Even Christians sin (cf. Romans 7; Eph. 4:14; 6:10-18).

▣ **"we have an Advocate with the Father"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which refers to Jesus' ongoing intercession as our heavenly Advocate (*paraklētos*). This was a legal term for a defense lawyer or "one called alongside to help" (from *para*, beside and *kaleō*, to call). It is used in the upper room discourse in the Gospel of John, for the Holy Spirit, our earthly, indwelling advocate (cf. John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). However, this is the only use of the term for Jesus (although it is implied in John 14:16; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24).

Paul used this same concept for the intercessory work of Christ in Rom. 8:34. In this same passage he also speaks of the intercession of the Holy Spirit in Rom. 8:26. We have an Advocate in heaven (Jesus) and an Advocate within (the Spirit), both of whom the loving Father sent on His behalf.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PARACLETE

▣ **"Jesus Christ the righteous"** This characterization is used of God the Father in 1 John 1:9. New Testament authors use several literary techniques to assert the deity of Jesus.

1. use titles used for God for Jesus
2. assert actions of God done by Jesus
3. use grammatically parallel phrases referring to both (OBJECTS of VERBS or PREPOSITIONS)

It speaks of the sinlessness (holiness, God likeness) of Christ (cf. 1 John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). He was the Father's means of bringing "righteousness" to a people.

2:2

NASB, NKJV	**"He Himself is the propitiation for our sins"**
NRSV	**"he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins"**
TEV	**"Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven"**
NJB, RSV	**"He is the sacrifice to expiate our sins"**
REB	**"He is himself a sacrifice to atone for our sins"**

The term *hilasmos* is used in the Septuagint for the lid of the Ark of the Covenant called the mercy seat or place of atonement. Jesus put Himself in our guilty place before God (cf. 1 John 4:10; Rom. 3:25).

Remember that the writers of the NT (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers, writing in Koine Greek. The place to go for the meaning of Koine Greek words is not the Greek lexicons but the OT translation into Koine Greek called the Septuagint (see SPECIAL TOPIC: GLOSSARY, "Septuagint"). It was the OT used by Palestinian Judaism and the early church.

In the Greco-Roman world this word carried the concept of a restoration of fellowship with an estranged deity by means of a price being paid, but the word is not used in this sense in the Septuagint (remember the NT authors [except Luke] were Hebrew thinkers, writing in Koine Greek). It was used in the Septuagint and in Heb. 9:5 to translate "mercy seat," which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant located in the Holy of Holies, the place where atonement was procured on behalf of the nation on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). See SPECIAL TOPIC: PROPITIATION.

This term must be dealt with in a way that does not lessen God's revulsion to sin, but affirms His positive redemptive attitude toward sinners. A good discussion is found in James Stewart's *A Man in Christ*, pp. 214-224. One way to accomplish this is to translate the term so that it reflects God's work in Christ: "a propitiatory sacrifice" or "with propitiatory power."

The modern English translations differ on how to understand this sacrificial term. The term "propitiation" implies that Jesus placated the wrath of God (cf. Rom. 1:18; 5:9; Eph. 5:6; Col.3:6). God's holiness is offended by mankind's sin. This is dealt with in the ministry of Jesus (cf. Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:17).

Some scholars (i.e., C. H. Dodd) feel that a pagan (Greek) concept (appeasing the anger of a deity) should not be applied to YHWH, therefore, they prefer "expiation" whereby Jesus' ministry dealt with mankind's guilt (cf. John 1:29; 3:16) before God and not God's anger against sin. However, both are biblically true.

▣ **"for our sins; and not ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world"** This refers to the potential of unlimited atonement (cf. 1 John 4:14; John 1:29; 3:16,17; 12:47; Rom. 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 3:4; Heb. 2:9; 7:25; 2 Pet. 3:9). Jesus died for the sin and sins of the whole world (cf. Gen. 3:15; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). The only thing that keeps the whole world from being saved is not sin, but unbelief. However, humans must initially respond and continually respond by faith, repentance, obedience, and perseverance!

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does John use so many VERBS involving the five senses?
2. List the sacrificial terms found in 1 John 1:7 and 9.
3. Explain the beliefs of the heretics who John is combating.
4. How does 1 John 1:9 relate to both Gnostics and believers?
5. Describe and define "confession."

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